

Safe and Healthy Return to Campus

1

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Mandatory Guidance for College and University Campus Learning

Higher education institutions are an important component of Vermont's economy, workforce development system, culture and vitality. The State of Vermont aims to make Vermont the safest place to go to college in the country during this public health emergency by establishing strict safety protocols that all institutions must follow. Administrators, faculty, staff and students must comply with this guidance to protect the health and safety of themselves and the communities that house these institutions.

This guidance is in addition to – not a substitute – for the existing [Work Safe Guidance](#). In the event these two documents contradict one another, this document supersedes the Work Safe Guidance. These guidelines are aimed to minimize the likelihood of an outbreak, and strictly following these guidelines will reduce both the likelihood of an outbreak and the severity of an outbreak. Institutions must follow both sets of guidance and operate any campus facilities that fall under the Work Safe Guidance in accordance with that guidance (for example, a gym or retail operation must comply with the corresponding Work Safe Guidance).

The State recognizes each institution is unique. Therefore, each institution shall adopt a written restart plan and keep it on file at the institution available for inspection by any employee, student or State Agency upon request. These plans must, at a minimum, outline how they will comply with this guidance. This guidance serves as a minimum standard for safety. Institutions are encouraged to exceed these baseline recommendations.

This document was created in collaboration with the state's colleges and universities, the Vermont Department of Health, the Vermont Department of Public Service, the Vermont Agency of Education and the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

CONTENTS

1. Decrease the risk of individuals infected with COVID-19 from entering the campus through effective public health prevention.....	3
a. Health Safety Contract	
b. Quarantine Requirements	
c. Health Screenings	
d. Sara Alert	
e. Reduce Visitors	
f. Testing	
g. Travel	
h. Academic Calendar	
i. Campus Events	
2. Decrease transmission of COVID-19 among staff and students once on campus through effective public health measures	7
a. Facial Coverings	
b. Health Screenings	
c. Contact Tracing Journal	
d. Hand Hygiene	
e. Cleaning and Disinfecting	
f. Physical Distancing	
g. Dining Halls	
h. Classrooms	
i. Residence Halls	
j. Libraries	
k. Athletics	
l. Performing Arts	
m. Transportation	
n. At Risk Students, Faculty and Staff	
3. Quickly identify individuals with COVID-19 and put containment procedures in place to minimize the impact on students, staff and education.....	11
a. Health Services	
b. Isolation / Quarantine Requirements	
c. Campus Contingency Plans	
d. Contact Tracing	

1) Decrease risk of individuals infected with COVID-19 from entering the campus through effective public health prevention

a. Health Safety Contract:

All students, faculty and staff shall sign an institution specific health safety pledge that affirms the individual is familiar and willing to comply with the state's COVID-19 restrictions and the institution's health policies. Institutions shall enforce this contract, and immediately remove any student who violates major public safety components of the contract (such as quarantine requirements) from campus for the duration of the COVID-19 crisis. Because of public health, existing judicial processes must err on the side of public health and remove a student from potentially further endangering the community by immediately removing the student from the campus. Faculty and staff who choose not to wear a face covering or follow existing public health safety standards shall face immediate disciplinary action.

b. Quarantine:

In order to protect the health and safety of students, faculty, staff and the community, all institutions must implement strict quarantine procedures for students returning to campus **at the beginning of semesters, after breaks, or after out-of-state travel by students to places requiring quarantine** using one of the following health protocols:

HOME STATE: If traveling to Vermont in a private vehicle without making a prolonged stop (avoid gatherings such as restaurants, limit gas stops, if overnight travel is required – reduce social contacts), quarantine at home for 14 days immediately prior to traveling to Vermont (individuals may complete a shorter quarantine if they receive a negative COVID-19 test after day 7 and travel directly to Vermont without breaking the quarantine); OR

IN VERMONT AFTER MASS TRANSIT TO VERMONT: If traveling to Vermont with people from multiple households, via bus, rail or commercial airlines, individuals must quarantine for 14 days upon arrival to Vermont (after day 7 the individual may get a COVID-19 test and upon receiving a negative result, end their quarantine); OR

NON-QUARANTINE COUNTIES: Students traveling to Vermont from a non-quarantine county as identified by the [Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development](#) **as of three weeks before in-person instruction begins on the campus**, who travel in a private vehicle without making a prolonged stop, may arrive without completing a quarantine.

Institutions must verify that students who need to complete a quarantine in Vermont do so. Students may quarantine in one of the following locations:

- At a private residence in Vermont, including the student's Vermont apartment; OR
- At a lodging property in Vermont including hotels and short-term rentals; OR
- In a college residence hall, under the following conditions:
 - **Campus-wide quarantine:** Students required to quarantine are brought back 14 days earlier than non-quarantine students and the entire quarantine cohort quarantines on the campus together for 7 days through negative COVID-19 test results. Institutions must ensure strict social distancing between staff while the students are on campus quarantine. Students are confined to the campus but may leave their residence hall for meals and activities. They shall practice strict social distancing from other quarantining individuals; OR
 - **Residence hall quarantine:** Students required to quarantine are isolated in the smallest groupings possible, and all services are provided to the students in their residence hall, including meals, learning, orientation, etc. The quarantine shall be 14 days or may end if a negative COVID-19 test result is received after day 7. The students have no interaction with individuals outside their quarantine cohort during the quarantine. Campuses may have more than one quarantine cohort on campus.

These quarantine policies will allow the Department of Health to work with colleges to implement isolation and quarantine policies for ill students and any individuals who have had close personal contact with those students.

For students who have a positive test on day 7, isolation procedures and contact tracing must be immediately initiated as in section 3.

c. Health Screenings:

All students must conduct a health screening prior to or upon campus arrival. This screening survey shall require an individual to verify that he or she has no symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, congestion or runny nose, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea). It is strongly recommended that a temperature check be conducted by the individual at home or a non-contact temperature check be conducted by the institution. Institutions may create systems that work best for their unique operations, including conducting the survey electronically or over the phone, but institutions must be able to demonstrate, if asked by employees or State health officials, how the system ensures employees have been pre-screened for symptoms before they enter the campus.

d. Register for Sara Alert:

Institutions shall ask students, faculty and staff to register with [Sara Alert](#) to get daily reminders via text, email or phone from the Vermont Department of Health to check for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 upon return to campus. Institutions may alternatively implement their own equivalent health screening tool in the place of Sara Alert.

e. Curtail Visitors:

Students may have two guests with them on move-in day. The guest must meet State of Vermont travel restrictions OR conduct a contactless drop off and quarantine during their visit to Vermont. Colleges should limit outside visitors and have no visitors to residence halls.

During a contactless drop off, guests may not enter any college facilities, must limit activities outside the car to helping the student unload at the curb, and must avoid contact (within 6 feet of any individual) with anyone outside their household. Those guests unable to complete a day trip to conduct the drop off may stay at a lodging property only if they quarantine at that property for the duration of the stay. Quarantine means they do not leave the room or house in which they are staying and make no trips to the grocery store, restaurants or any other places where they may come in contact with others. Using lodging property amenities such as pools, spas, gyms, recreation equipment or other general use facilities is also not permitted. If a guest traveling from a quarantine county stays with family or friends at a private residence, the individuals hosting that guest must quarantine upon the guests departure.

f. Testing:

The institutions shall ensure that all students (no matter where they come from) will undergo a COVID-19 testing protocol arranged for by the institution **upon a student's return to campus for the semester, upon return from a break, or if they travel out of state to places requiring quarantine by the state's travel requirements.** This testing requirement does not eliminate the need for quarantine. The cost of the testing protocol will be the responsibility of the institution or individual. The State will consider the requirements of Section 19 of H. 965 in collaboratively working with the institutions to identify a mechanism to pay for the cost of testing.

- i. All students from a quarantine county as identified by [ACCD's travel policy](#), or out-of-state students from any county who arrive in Vermont through mass transportation (commercial air travel, bus, train), must have a "zero day" test conducted within 48 hours of arrival at campus. Those receiving tests 48 hours before coming to campus must travel directly to campus in personal vehicle.
- ii. **Students coming to a campus from Vermont, who have not traveled within the past 14 days outside of Vermont, do not need a "zero day" test.**
- iii. All students (including Vermonters) **must have a day 7 test.**

This testing protocol is for both residential campuses and non-residential campuses.

g. Travel:

All institutional out-of-state travel by faculty, staff or students shall be suspended except with institutional leadership permission. Students should only travel to and from non-quarantine counties pursuant to the [ACCD travel policy](#) or plan to quarantine. Upon return from breaks, students, faculty and staff will follow ACCD travel quarantine policy, and will be required to complete the return to campus quarantine and testing protocol contained in this document.

h. Change Academic Schedule:

Institutions must modify their academic calendars to reduce the instances of students traveling outside of Vermont and returning to the campus. When students participating in in-person instruction depart campus for Thanksgiving break, institutions must halt all on-campus learning through February 1. This includes in-person short January terms or short-term residencies. Residence halls can open to students who leave campus for the break no earlier than January 15 to allow students who need to quarantine to do so before February 1 in-person instruction begins. Limited exceptions may be made for students who must stay on campus or return to campus early if the institutions put systems in place to accommodate necessary quarantine requirements in section 1 (b) of this guidance for both returners and students who return on or after January 15.

Institutions that have students remaining on campus during and after Thanksgiving due to clinical rotations, graduate research, medical students, personal hardships, hosting international students, athletics, and working students may continue in-person instruction for only for those students that did not leave campus. These students must remain in Vermont or only visit counties and states that do not require quarantine upon their return for the duration of in-person instruction.

Institutions shall eliminate traditional “spring breaks” by eliminating breaks from the spring semester calendar that would encourage out-of-state travel by students, faculty or staff. Alternative breaks that encourage students to stay in Vermont and on campus are allowed.

Institutions that are unable to accommodate these requirements must get approval from the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

i. Reduce on-campus events:

Institutions shall reduce on-campus programming from outside speakers, presenters and community members, including reducing events that would encourage large crowds such as parents weekend and alumni weekend. All on campus events must comply with [ACCD event guidance](#).

2) Decrease transmission of COVID-19 among staff and students once on campus through effective public health measures.

a. **Face Coverings:**

Face coverings shall be worn by all faculty, staff, students and visitors when in the presence of others and in public. A residence hall is not considered a public space. When outdoors, and more than six feet apart from one another, masks are not absolutely required, but discretion must be exercised, and masks should be carried on the person in the event circumstances warrant their use

b. **Health Screenings:**

All students, faculty and staff must complete a daily health screening prior to interacting with anyone on the campus, including going to class, going to a dining hall, or participating in any campus activity. This screening survey shall require an individual to verify that he or she has no symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, congestion or runny nose, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea). It is strongly recommended that a temperature check be conducted by the individual at home or a non-contact temperature check be conducted by the institution. Institutions may create systems that work best for their unique operations, including conducting the survey electronically or over the phone – but the institution must be able to demonstrate, if asked by employees or state health officials, how the system ensures employees have been pre-screened for symptoms before they enter the campus.

c. **Contact Tracing Journal:**

Students, faculty and staff should consider keeping a contact journal – a list of other people who you have been in close contact with each day. If you do get sick, this would make it easier to get in touch with those people so they can take proper precautions to prevent further spread of COVID-19.

d. **Hand Hygiene:**

Students, faculty and staff must have easy and frequent access to soap and water or hand sanitizer. Handwashing or hand sanitization is required frequently.

e. Cleaning and Disinfecting:

All common spaces (when open to students, faculty and staff) and equipment, including bathrooms, frequently touched surfaces and doors, tools and equipment, and vehicles must be cleaned regularly and, when possible, prior to transfer from one person to another, in accordance with CDC guidance

f. Physical Distancing:

Students, faculty and staff must observe strict social distancing of 6 feet while on campus. Limit the occupancy of designated common areas, so that occupants maintain strict social distancing of no less than 6 feet per individual.

g. Dining Halls:

Institutions shall reduce the density of dining halls by establishing methods such as a meal “shift” system, creating regular tables to reduce interaction, and providing take-out service so students may eat in their rooms.

h. Classrooms:

Institutions must reduce density of classrooms to ensure at least 6 feet of social distancing between students (such as leaving seats empty between students). Students must have cloth face coverings on during classes. Institutions should consider an assigned seating policy to assist in the event of contact tracing.

i. Residence Hall Density:

Institutions should consider limiting shared living spaces to no more than 2 people per room. Common areas shall remain closed or restricted to a capacity that allows for physical distancing.

j. Libraries:

College and university libraries shall operate at a reduced capacity to allow for a reduction in density. This shall not exceed 50 percent of fire capacity, or if a fire capacity is not listed, 1 person per 100 square feet. Library operations must ensure that patrons can physically distance from one-another, including reducing the number of chairs at a table, closing every-other study cubby to facilitate distancing, and reducing the density of computer labs and other areas where patrons may congregate for extended periods of time in the presence of others. At no time should more than 75 people be in any one discrete area of a large library – such as on the same floor, in a single room, or in an event space. Libraries must follow CDC and Department of Health guidelines to clean and sanitize frequently touched and used tables, furniture and other high-touch surfaces. Cloth face covering must be worn by patrons and staff.

k. Athletics:

Institutions must follow all COVID-19 related health and safety guidance issued by the NCAA and the institutions' corresponding athletic conference guidance/rules. In addition, all collegiate sports teams traveling from or to Vermont must comply with the state's cross state travel guidance and quarantine requirements or have a testing, discipline, and student-athlete code of conduct in place and approved by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

Institutions that conduct athletic competitions only within the state's cross state travel guidance and quarantine requirements must limit competitions and travel to competitions with Vermont-based teams or teams that do not require quarantine under the state's cross state travel guidance. A team from outside of Vermont only meets the definition of "team that does not require quarantine under the state's cross state travel guidance" if it too only plays teams that meet Vermont's cross state travel guidance. For example, a team from a Maine "green county" would only be eligible to play a Vermont team if the Maine team adhered to Vermont's cross state travel map when playing other teams.

An institution's alternative plan, which may allow the school to travel more freely and host schools from beyond green counties, must include: three PCR tests weekly for all athletes, coaches and support staff participating in athletic matches; an enhanced social contract in place for all student-athletes, coaches, and support staff that commits students to reducing their social circles; and an actionable plan to remove student-athletes, coaches and support staff from competition and campus if they violate the code of conduct. A positive test from a member of the team community will require the school to cancel or delay any imminent games, practices or travel for the entire team, and will require active consultation with the Vermont Department of Health. This guidance will be reevaluated on or about January 1, 2021.

Institutions that host collegiate sports teams from outside of Vermont will be held accountable for visiting teams' adherence to the state's collegiate athletics COVID-19 policies. Visiting teams must be participating in a three-test-weekly testing protocol (PCR preferred) for high contact sports or at least once-per-week testing protocol (PCR preferred) for low-contact sports. Visiting teams must adhere to strict isolation when coming to Vermont. Game day travel to and from Vermont is encouraged, hotel stays are only to occur when absolutely necessary, and when they do occur, the teams must quarantine while at the hotel, avoiding contact with other guests and staff. Visiting teams may not dine out, sightsee, or participate in any events outside from the athletic competition.

No spectators are allowed at competitions in Vermont. When competing in away games, teams must work with the host team to reduce or eliminate spectators at the host venue. The Vermont team must ensure there is no contact between athletes, coaches and staff and the spectators / the public at the host venue.

I. Performing Arts:

Only performing arts (dance, singing, bands, etc.) that allow for social distancing should occur. Any performances shall comply with ACCD guidance on events.

m. Transportation:

Private charter buses and large multi-passenger vans should only be used if density is reduced to allow for social distancing. This includes reducing capacity to 50 percent, leaving every other seat empty, and every other row open. Cloth face coverings must be worn.

When charter buses and vans are used for the transportation of groups that usually have close contact, such as an athletic team or those from the same household, the institution may exceed the required capacity reductions, but shall ensure facial coverings and social distancing is practiced as practicable.

n. Protect At Risk Faculty, Staff and Students:

Implement strategies and policies to address the needs of faculty, staff and students who have underlying health issues. These include options, where necessary, for remote instruction, special living situations, and course reassignment.

3) Quickly identify individuals with COVID-19 and put containment procedures in place to minimize the impact on students, staff and education

a. Adequate Health Services:

Ensure your institution's health services is prepared with adequate personal protective equipment, access to testing capacity and a COVID coordination plan.

b. Isolation Procedures:

Institutions must have an isolation and quarantine plan in place in the event of a positive test and multiple exposures. This shall include having an arrangement in place to accommodate 5 percent of the college population in isolation and/or quarantine.

c. Campus Contingency Plans:

Institutions need to develop a procedure in the event the Department of Health determines there is an outbreak on campus, including considering for remote learning and quarantining portions or all of the campus.

d. Contact Tracing:

In the event of a positive case, the Vermont Department of Health will coordinate and conduct contact tracing.